DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 998 FL 021 319

AUTHOR Wolfram, Walt
TITLE Ethical Considerations in Language Awareness Programs.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 42p.; Paper presented at the American Association of Applied Linguistics Ethics Symposium (April 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperation; Curriculum Development; *Ethics; Language Patterns; Language Research; Language Teachers; *Language Variation; Linguistic Theory; *Metalinguistics; Program Descriptions; Program Implementation; Second Language Learning; *Social Action

ABSTRACT

Two traditional principles have served as the basis for the involvement of linguists in social issues, namely the principle of error correction and the principle of debt incurred (Labov, 1982). It is argued that an additional principle should motivate linguists to take a more proactive role in social issues, the principle of linguistic gratuity. One such proactive role is involvement in Language Awareness Programs, which are designed to provide an understanding of and appreciation for variety in language. This paper considers the rationale for and programmatic structure of two experimental language awareness programs, along with a discussion of some of the ethical issues that need to be considered in the implementation of such programs. Ethical considerations include the ethics of persuasion and need, of presentation, of representation, of sociocultural change, and of accommodation. An example of a curriculum unit with a humanistic objective, sample exercises demonstrating the scientific study of language patterning, an exercise with a sociohistorical objective, and an exercise promoting "island quaintness"--i.e., the lexical heritage of the North Carolinian island of Ocrakoke--are appended. (Contains 22 references.) (Author/JP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 361 998

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN LANGUAGE AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Walt Wolfram
William C. Friday Professor
North Carolina State University

Presented at the Ethics Symposium, AAAL
April 1993

FL021319

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Walt Wolfram

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ABSTRACT

Two traditional principles have served as the basis for the involvement of linguists in social issues, namely, the *principle of error correction* and *the principle of debt incurred* (Labov 1982). It is argued that an additional principle should motivate linguists to take a more proactive role in social issues, namely the *principle of linguistic gratuity*. One such proactive role is involvement in Language Awareness Programs, which are designed to provide an understanding of and appreciation for variety in language. We consider the rationale for and programmatic structure of two experimental language awareness programs, along with a discussion of some of the ethical issues that need to be considered in the implementation of such programs. Ethical considerations include the ethics of persuasion and need, the ethics of presentation, the ethics of representation, the ethics of socio-educational change, and the ethics of accommodation.

INTRODUCTION

The relatively short history of social dialectology has shown that it is quite possible to combine a commitment to the objective description of sociolinguistic data and a concern for social issues. At the same time that social dialectologists have contributed substantively to our understanding of language variation, they have, at various junctures over the past three decades, become involved in several important social and socio-educational issues related to dialect diversity.[1]

According to Labov (1982), there are two primary principles that may motivate linguists to take social action, namely, the *principle of error correction* and the *principle of debt incurred*. These are articulated as follows:

principle of error correction

> A scientist who becomes aware of a widespread idea or social practice with important consequences that is invalidated by his own data is obligated to bring this error to the attention of the widest possible audience.(Labov 1982:172).

principle of debt incurred

> An investigator who has obtained linguistic data from members of a speech community has an obligation to use the knowledge based on that data for the benefit of the community, when it has need of it. (Labov 1982:173)

There are several outstanding instances in the history of social dialectology where these principles have been applied. In the 1960s, sociolinguists took a prominent pro-difference stance in the so-called *deficit-difference controversy* that was

prominent pro-difference stance in the so-called *deficit-difference controversy* that was taking place within education and within speech and language pathology (Baratz 1968, Labov 1969, Taylor 1969, Wolfram 1970). Consonant with the principle of error correction, sociolinguists took a united stand against the classification and treatment of normal, natural dialect differences as language deficits or disorders. There is little doubt that sociolinguists played a major role in pushing the definition of linguistic normalcy toward a dialectally-sensitive one, although the practical consequences of this definition are still being worked out in many clinical and educational settings (Cole and Deal forthcoming; Wolfram, Adger, and Detwyler 1993).

In keeping with the principle of debt incurred, social dialectologists also rose to the occasion in the celebrated Ann Arbor Decision (1979). Linguistic testimony was critical to Judge Joiner's ruling in favor of the African American plaintiff children who brought suit against the Board of Education for not taking their dialect into account in reading instruction. In effect, the judge ruled that the defendants had failed to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers, in violation of Title 20 of the U.S. Code, Section 1703 (f).[2] In compliance with the judge's ruling, a series of workshops was conducted to upgrade awareness and to apply sociolinguistic expertise in reading instruction.

These relatively well-known cases of social involvement are not the only ones in which the principles of social action articulated by Labov have been applied. There are many other instances where linguists have been involved in individual or corporate cases related to language equity in the workplace, the educational system,

and the society at large. For the most part, however, the social role assumed by the linguist in these cases has been that of *reactive advocacy*, where the linguist responds to a social inequity by providing sociolinguistic evidence. In the typical scenario, a linguist who has conducted research in a particular community is called upon or feels obligated to respond to some erroneous sociolinguistic assumption or conclusion about the language of the community as the language is threatened socio-politically or socio-educationally.

A POSITIVE PROACTIVE ROLE

While I do not mean to minimize the reactive advocacy role for linguists, I would like to suggest that there is another level of social commitment that investigators should adopt toward the language communities who have provided them data.[3] This level is more positive and proactive, in that it actively pursues ways in which linguistic favors can be returned to the community. Thus, I propose an additional principle of social commitment which I call *the principle of linguistic gratuity*.

principle of linguistic gratuity

> Investigators who have obtained linguistic data from members of a speech community should actively pursue positive ways in which they can return linguistic favors to the community.

This principle is not mutually exclusive with the principles offered by Labov; in fact, it seems to be a reasonable extension of social obligation on the part of linguists. However, this level of social responsibility is not restricted by a qualification based on recognized community needs, as is Labov's principle of indebtedness. Instead, I maintain that linguistic researchers should creatively search for a community-based collaborative model to return linguistic favors. I focus here on sociolinguistic research, but many of the principles are certainly applicable to language research on a broader level.

Sociolinguists have been conducting community based studies for a number of years now, but the majority of studies have been unidirectional in terms of linguistic profit and education. Researchers have not typically involved themselves in community based programs that positively project the language of the community. From the perspective of the gratuity principle, however, they should actively look for ways in which they can dovetail their research findings with community-based collaborative ventures, including but not limited to the traditional educational system. In the following sections, I give an overview of two initiatives that attempt to apply the linguistic gratuity principle. The programs described here involve a school-based program in a large metropolitan area, Baltimore, Maryland, and a more broadly-based community program in a small quasi-isolated island community off the coast islands of North Carolina. The situations that gave rise to the Language Awareness Programs in these communities are quite different and the ways in which the projects are being worked out vary, yet there are some common principles that unite the

projects.[4] Furthermore, there are some common ethical considerations that have arisen in these disparate situations that need to be discussed. In the following sections, I briefly summarize these programs, including the rationale for their development. This is followed by a discussion of some of the ethical issues that we have had to face in the process of their development and implementation.

THE BALTIMORE PROJECT

As part of a recent research project to enhance the delivery of services to African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers in special education, Wolfram, Adger, and Detwyler (1992) piloted a language awareness curriculum in the Baltimore City Public Schools. The program was designed to introduce students to the natural basis of language variation for humanistic, scientific, and socio-historical reasons.

Why should students be introduced to the study of language differences when they already engage in the study of some aspect of language arts or English language study at practically every grade level in their compulsory education? There are several reasons for suggesting that such a curriculum unit is desirable and that it is consonant with the principles for social action set forth above. Educational systems should be committed to a fundamental search for truth--the truth about laws of nature and matter. When it comes to language differences, however, there is an educational tolerance of misinformation and folklore that is matched in few subject areas. There exists an entrenched mythology about "dialects" that pervades the

popular and educational understanding of this topic, particularly with respect to the nature of standard and vernacular varieties (Wolfram 1991a). And the factual misinformation is not all innocent folklore. At the very least, the American educational system should assume responsibility for replacing the entrenched mythology about language differences with factual information, in keeping with the *principle of error correction*. To illustrate a sample lesson plan from the curriculum piloted in Baltimore with a humanistic goal, I include a lesson unit on the nature of dialects in Appendix A.

The issue of educational equity is also tied in with the need for accurate information about language differences. Operating on erroneous assumptions about language differences, it is easy for educators and students to fall prey to the perpetuation of unjustified stereotypes about language as it relates to class, race, and region. The potential for dialect discrimination (Milroy and Milroy 1985) cannot be taken more lightly than any other type of discrimination. Thus, an educational system that takes on the responsibility to educate students concerning the truth about racial and social differences and the effects of this discrimination based on these differences in other areas should feel obliged to extend this discussion to language as well.

Equity in education is hardly limited to how educators and professional specialists categorize students based on language differences. It also affects how students feel about other students and themselves. Students who speak socially favored varieties may view their dialectally-different peers as linguistically deficient.

Worse yet, speakers of socially disfavored varieties may come to accept this viewpoint about their own variety of language. Students need to understand the natural sociolinguistic principles that lead to the development and maintenance of language varieties apart from their relative social status. A rationale for a Language Awareness Program embedded in equity considerations is in keeping with Labov's *principle of debt incurred.*

The study of language differences offers another enticement, namely, the investigation of language patterning as a kind of scientific inquiry. In its present form, the study of language in the schools has been reduced to laborious, taxonomic exercises such as "parts of speech" identification, sentence parsing, and other comparable metalinguistic exercises of questionable value. The study of language differences offers a fascinating window through which the dynamic nature of language patterning can be viewed. Looking at the nature of language differences can provide a natural laboratory for making generalizations drawn from carefully described sets of data. Students can hypothesize about certain forms of language and then check them out on the basis of actual usage patterns. This process is, of course, a type of scientific inquiry into language that is generally untapped in students' present instruction about language. Appendix B includes three different exercises that exemplify how the study of language differences can be linked to a scientific goal. The exercises include an Eastern New England dialect, a Southern dialect, and AAVE. This selection of representative dialects falls in line with our humanistic goal of exposing students to a variety of dialects along regional, social, and ethnic

dimensions at the same time it fulfills our scientific goal of introducing students to the nature of language patterning.

On a cultural-historical level, the program's objective is to have students gain a sense of appreciation for the historical development of a variety of English, in this case AAVE. As students consider the ancestral cultural linguistic traditions and circumstances that gave rise to this variety, they see the continuity of their ancestral language heritage. We view this as a positive presentation of a unique sociolinguistic history. Part of a unit representing a socio-historical objective is illustrated in Appendix C.

THE OCRACOKE PROGRAM

The Ocracoke Language Awareness Program is, at this point, still programmatic since we have only completed the initial phase of our data collection. However, it is intended to be a more broadly based community project than the Baltimore program. This is possible, in part, because of some community-based cultural values that provide a comfortable context for the application of the *linguistic gratuity principle.*

First of all, we are writing a popular account of the language history of Ocracoke that is intended to be useful to the Ocracoke residents, including the school system (Wolfram and Estes forthcoming). In part, this history is motivated by the *principle of error correction* since there is a widely publicized stereotype that Ocracoke speech is simply a retention of Elizabethan English. While relic forms are certainly

found in Ocracoke, the general stereotype needs to be challenged on the basis of carefully documented evidence. The language history and description of Ocracoke speech, however, is also motivated by the *linguistic gratuity principle.* Islanders are proud of their historical heritage and are quite knowledgeable about their genealogies, and we hope to build on this indigenous value by working with the community to describe the role of language traditions in the development of the Ocracoke community. For example, Ocracokers are conscious of some unique island or Outer Banks lexical items and some of these items have, in fact, become symbolic tokens of island quaintness.[5] Thus, a simple, relatively superficial vocabulary-based exercise such as that provided in Appendix D is rooted in islander's pride in their unique historical lexical heritage.

We are also compiling an archival tape of representative speech samples from our interviews to share with the Ocracoke Historical Preservation Society so that language will be preserved along with other physical and cultural artifacts. Language is, in many ways, the most sacred of all cultural traditions and is the rightful property of its users. We hope to be sensitive to this unique role of language, and to preserve this unique artifact that has been shared with us by archiving for present and future generations of Ocracokers the current state of Ocracoke English and the apparent time changes that are represented in the current population of Ocracokers.

And, with the cooperation of the educational system, we plan to produce a modified Language Awareness Program on the model of the Baltimore Project which

is appropriate for Ocracoke. Thus, school children should be exposed to a unit on language as they explore the socio-historical circumstances that have molded the development and maintenance of Ocracoke in particular and the coastal culture of North Carolina in general, along with the general development of dialects in the United States. In the best of all scenarios, we hope to involve students not simply as passive observers of language variation but as student ethnographers in the active collection and description of Ocracoke speech.

SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The overview of the Baltimore and Ocracoke Language Awareness Programs are idealized accounts in that they do not consider some of the difficulties we have encountered and continue to struggle with in the implementation of the programs; nor do they consider some of issues that we have wrestled with in attempting to apply the three principles of social responsibility set forth at the outset of this discussion. In reality, the road leading to these programs has hardly been a smooth one. In fact, we finally piloted the Language Awareness Program in Baltimore only after a string of rejections by other school systems over the last decade. And the program does not yet have system-wide approval; it is still under close scrutiny and there is no assurance that it will be adopted as a regular part of the curriculum or even a regular optional curriculum for language specialists and classroom teachers. In the process, we have struggled to be faithful to our application of social principles while being sensitive to the desires and goals of the educational and social

community in Baltimore. And it is at point that we need to raise some of the attendant ethical issues.

There are at least five different kinds of ethical considerations that we have faced in our journey toward a Language Awareness Program. Some of these we have resolved to our own satisfaction, but others we still struggle with as we attempt to fulfill our socio-educational responsibility while respecting the values and convictions of the communities who have shared their language heritage with us.

One of the immediate considerations in the types of Language Awareness Programs we have promulgated concerns the *ethics of persuasion and need*. As mentioned previously, our programs have NOT been received gratuitously as manifestations of the revealed sociolinguistic truth. Instead, we have had to convince systems that there is a need for this type of program. The "need" that Labov stipulates for the application of the *principle of debt incurred* has not typically been recognized on a collective level within the educational system or the community. Our rationale seems relatively straightforward and transparently ethical: students and community residents have a right to accurate knowledge about laws of nature and matter with respect to language. Furthermore, there is a reasonable humanistic, scientific, and socio-historical basis for sharing this truth with students. But remember, it is primarily sociolinguistic outsiders who are telling a school system and community what THEIR need is. We are not responding to the explicitly stated needs of a community but informing the community; we are trying to convince them of a need WE observe. In light of some language doctrines that linguists historically

have sold or attempted to sell to the educational establishment, I honestly cannot blame an educational system that is suspicious of a group of outside sociolinguistic experts who propose socio-educational solutions. Furthermore, there is good reason to see a socio-political agenda behind some of the positions that sociolinguists have taken (e.g., Butters 1991). We must ask, then, to what extent our own motive to pursue with students and educators the truth about dialects is separable from other agendas. For example, how sensitive are we to the role of educational institutions as socialization agents of mainstream middle-class values? Can the pursuit of knowledge in language variation ever really be decontextualized from a socio-political situation? These are just some of the questions we have to consider as we honestly face the *ethics of our persuasion* as we justify the need of our program.

A second area of concern relates to the *ethics of representation*. Curiously, the disproportionate sociolinguistic attention publically paid to AAVE vis-a-vis other vernacular varieties over the last three decades has resulted in an unfortunate representation of dialects in many educational and public settings. With regular media coverage, countless "studies," and continued socio-educational concern, the term dialect has in some educational circles become a new synonym for AAVE. This is unfortunate because it singles out this dialect group disproportionately while creating a distorted picture of dialects in the United States. Furthermore, such unbalanced attention has sometimes been resented by African American communities as once again African American behavior is assigned marked, peculiar status.[6] In the presentation of our Language Awareness Program, we have been careful to represent

other dialects, but we must always be vigilant about disproportionate representation. In our Baltimore program, we start out with dialects other than African American to demonstrate practically that this is NOT a curriculum about AAVE; it is a curriculum about dialects that includes AAVE as one of the important varieties of English.

One of the issues we have had to consider dialects is way we portray the different dialects. Choices are made about how we profile the dialects we include in our selective presentation. In most cases, we have chosen to portray the more marked or extreme versions of dialects. For Eastern New England speech, for example, we select a categorical version of *r*-lessness even though there is considerable sociolinguistic variation across groups and even within individual speakers. Our portrayal of Appalachian English and AAVE also tends to focus on a more marked vernacular, or basilectal variety. And for Ocracoke, it is tempting to depict what islanders call the "brogue," a more vernacular version of the dialect spoken by a minority of speakers, most of whom are older residents: but the sociolinguistic situation is much more complex. In our presentation, we thus run the danger of creating simplistic dialect caricatures that defy the authentic complexity of the dialect communities we wish to represent. There is no easy antidote for this presentation dilemma given the restricted curriculum units we have devised, but certainly we must be sensitive to oversimplification. At present, we still grapple with our *ethics of presentation*, realizing that we must be prudent about falling prey to the Li'l Abner syndrome.

I noted previously that one of the underlying goals of our program is related to socio-educational equity. We hope that Language Awareness Programs will be a step toward according more equitable sociolinguistic treatment to vernacular dialect speakers. This position is taken on the basis of a socio-educational history that has traditionally misdiagnosed legitimate differences as disorders or inherent language deficits. The fact remains that there is still a grossly disproportionate number of vernacular dialect speakers who end up in special education programs on the basis of language assessment that does not carefully distinguish difference from disorder (Adger, Wolfram, and Detwyler 1993). And teachers' informal judgments of dialect speakers' capabilities and their corresponding expectations remain sensitive to the Pygmalian effect. I thus openly confess to a socio-educational agenda that includes more equitable sociolinguistic treatment of vernacular dialect speakers. Admittedly, my concern stems from an idealistic sociolinguistic perspective which is not necessarily shared by the education system and society at large. And, if I am introspectively honest, I must admit that the position may even be at odds with a sociolinguistic premise that admits the inevitability of standardization in language, along with an important set of social functions embodied in this standardization process (Garvey and Mathiot 1956). To what extent can the socio-educational goal of equity and the inevitable separatist function that derives from standardization realistically co-exist? And to what extent is it legitimate to motivate a Language Awareness Program with an underlying goal relating to socio-educational change. Unfortunately, sociolinguists, like any group of scientists, may be prone to oversell

when they link their empirical findings to socio-political and socio-educational agendas. I am reminded of my own statement in a *Language* review article that considered a possible socio-political agenda behind the so-called divergence hypothesis with respect to AAVE:

> In the long run, a strict adherence to the linguistic facts will best serve everyone involved in issues related to VBE [Vernacular Black English]--the academic community of language variationists, the community of VBE speakers, and the disseminators of sociolinguistic information to the broader American public. (Wolfram 1990:131)

Are we guilty of seeing only the socio-political specks in the eyes of other linguists while ignoring the beam in our own socio-political eyes? Certainly, we need to consider the *ethics of socio-educational change* carefully, honestly, and realistically.

Finally, we need to consider *ethics of accommodation*. We have tried to be honest in noting that our Language Awareness Program is not intended to provide the teaching of standard English, nor is it intended to be a step that leads to the eventual teaching of Standard English. It is our position that students deserve the truth about dialect diversity and exposure to the rich dialect heritage of the United States whether or not they ever choose to buy into the values that lead to the acquisition of a standard variety. At the same time, our program is not philosophically opposed to learning standard English. In fact, I personally endorse

the acquisition of Standard English so long as it is understood that this variety is primarily a sociolinguistic cosmetic marking of mainstream middle-class culture. Is the separation of the our current Language Awareness Program from important issues of standardness an artificial separation? One of the most hotly-debated aspects of Language Awareness Programs in the British Isles is their goal of using the programs in a progression toward teaching students Received Pronunciation (Clark, et al. 1990). In my opinion, this debate is an important one, which leads to questions about the ultimate goal of such programs in an educational system. One of the most regular questions posed by teachers is how our Language Awareness Program relates to students' need for the standard variety in school. The answer is very complex, since it must be recognized that (1) there is an academic discourse register that seems important to school socialization and this register involves to some extent notions of a standard variety (Heath 1983) and (2) the school = standard/home = vernacular language equation is far too simplistic to be useful to educators; in fact, this dichotomy misrepresents the complex use of dialect within and outside the school.

The neutral, removed position that our Language Awareness Program takes with respect to the teaching of standard English raises an unavoidable issue with respect to the *ethics of accommodation*. In actual classroom experimentation with the program, we find ourselves performing balancing acts that may not be fair to the educational systems nor to our alleged program goals. This dilemma is perhaps best summarized by a situation that took place in one of the pilot classrooms. As I conducted a dialect exercise in which African American students selected the

grammatical context for habitual *be*, I noticed that the classroom teacher became increasingly uncomfortable with my affirmation of students' responses to the grammaticality of sentences such as *Sometimes my ears be itching* (versus the ungrammaticality of a sentence such as **My ears be itching right now*). I must confess that I "compromised" as I sensed that the teacher might feel my lesson was directly opposing her traditional efforts to teach standard English. I concluded the exercise by asking the students how they might be expected to say these sentences when called on in class. Without hesitation, they translated the sentences into their standard English counterparts. The teacher was happy, and I didn't actually didn't feel as sociolinguistically compromised as I thought I might. In fact, I realized that there is a very tender balance between promoting the legitimacy and beauty of linguistic diversity and accommodating traditional socio-education goals that embrace some dimensions of the standard variety.

Upon later reflection I decided that maybe I didn't need to be sociolinguistic revolutionary after all. Perhaps it's adequate to be a sociolinguistic "do gooder" who recognizes that some of the indigenous cultural values of the educational system and the community must be conceded if we ever hope to have any significant sociolinguistic input. And I also remembered the strong debates that my wife and I had while raising our four children to "achieve" in a society that is less than ideal. While I pontificated about the legitimacy and richness of vernacular dialects, she quietly but dogmatically insisted on our children's accommodation of existent language standards, even if it was a "sell out."[7] Our children eventually faced the

middle-class workplace with reasonable facility in the standard variety. At the same time, they also did acquire a deep respect and appreciation for dialect diversity despite all my righteous bantering. How ethical is it for me to ask an educational system or a community to do what I couldn't accomplish with my own family? Progress is within reach, but sociolinguistic utopia remains elusive.

FOOTNOTES

1. In this introduction, I limit myself to issues related to dialect diversity within English. Issues related to languages other than English, such as bilingualism and the "English Only" movement, deserve separate attention. Certainly, viable Language Awareness Programs should include the consideration of languages other than English, but this is left for separate discussion. Thanks to Carolyn Adger, Natalie Estes, and Barbara Fennell for their comments on my rambling reflections.

2. The relevant portions of this Code are as follows:

> No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by ...
>
> (f) the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs.

3. There are, of course, some deeper ethical issues related to sociolinguistic data and social involvement that need to be considered from this position of reactive advocacy, such as the issue of empirical evidence and sociolinguistic premise, the definition of "community need", etc., but I leave these for another discussion.

4. I use the term Language Awareness Program to refer to programs that are intended to gain an understanding of and appreciation for variation in language. The terms is used here somewhat more broadly than it is used in to describe the educational curriculum of so-called Language Awareness Programs in the United Kingdom and other European countries (Hawkins 1984, 1985, but also see the types of controversy surrounding the program as discussed, for example, by Clark, et al. 1990).

5. Two anecdotes from our fieldwork experience in Ocracoke support this observation. After one interview with a historically prominent community member, the interviewee gave the fieldworkers a tee shirt that was inscribed with the phrase "Younguns hain't I been mommucked [sic] this day!!!" This phrase obviously seizes upon several relic forms (e.g. [h] retention in *haint* initial [w] loss in *younguns* 'young ones'), but particularly the lexical item *mommuck* (alternatively spelled *mammick*), which is widely recognized by Ocracokers as a local term meaning 'to physically or mentally hassle.'

In another incident that took place during a preliminary visit to a potential interviewee, one of our fieldworkers was kiddingly challenged to find the meaning of *meehonkey* as a token of Island speech. After an extended period of good-natured teasing, the potential interviewee finally whispered to him the meaning of the term, excluding two other research team members who were present at the social visit. In effect, the subject was symbolically accepting the fieldworker through sharing the

meaning of the localized lexical item. From that point, the fieldworker and the subject developed a close personal friendship that extended considerably beyond the typical outside fieldworker-local interviewee relationship typical of sociolinguistic studies.

6. One of the comments sometimes offered by African Americans after viewing the video *American Tongues* (Alvarez and Kolker 1987) supports this observation. On a number of occasions, I have been told by African Americans that they were glad this video profiled dialects other than AAVE so that it could help dispel the notion that only African Americans spoke noteworthy dialects.

7. For the record, my wife, Marge, is the wisest person I have ever known in matters of everyday living. And this includes a lot of linguists among my acquaintances.

REFERENCES

Adger, C., Wolfram, W., & Detwyler, J. 1992. *Enhancing Delivery of Services to Black Special Education Students from Non-Standard English Backgrounds.* Office of Special Education Programs. Cooperative Agreement HO23400008-92.

Alvarez, L & Kolker, A. (Producers). 1987. *American Tongues.* New York, NY: Center for New American Media.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. 1983. "Social Dialects: A Position Paper" *ASHA* 25(9):23-24.

Baratz, J. 1968. "Language and the Economically Deprived Child: A Perspective," *ASHA* 10 (April): 143-145.

Bernstein, B. 1981. "Codes, Modalities, and the Process of Cultural Reproduction: A Model," *Language in Society* 10:327-63.

Cheshire, J. & Edwards, V. 1991. "Schoolchildren as Sociolinguistic Researchers," *Language and Education* 3:000-000.

Cheshire, J., Edwards, V. Munstermann, H., & Weltens, B. eds. *Dialect and Education: Some European Perspectives.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Clark, R., Fairclough, N., Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, M. 1990. "Critical Language Awareness, Part I: A Critical Review of Three Current Approaches to Language Awareness," *Language and Education* 4:249-260.

Cole, L. & Deal, D. eds. forthcoming. *Communication Disorders in Multicultural Populations.* Asha. Rockville, MD.

Cummins, J. 1986. "Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention," *Harvard Educational Review* 56, No.1.

Department of Education and Science. 1988. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English (The Kingman Report)*. London: Author.

Department of Education and Science. 1989. *English for Ages 5-16 (The Cox Report)*. London: Author.

Edwards, V. 1990. *A Directory of Dialect Resources*. London: Economic and Social Research Council.

Hawkins, E. 1984. *Awareness of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hawkins, E. ed. 1985. *Awareness of Language Series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Labov, W. 1982. "Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science," *Language in Society* 11:165-201.

Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. 1985. *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescriptivism and Standardization*. London: Routledge & Kegan.

Taylor, O. L. 1969. "Social and Political Involvement of the American Speech and Hearing Association," *ASHA* 11:216-218.

Wolfram, W. 1990. "Re-examining the Status of Vernacular Black English," *Language* 66: 121-133.

Wolfram, W. 1991. *Dialects and American English*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Wolfram, W. & Christian, D. 1989. *Dialects and Education: Issues and Answers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Wolfram, W., Detwyler, J. & Adger, C. 1992. *A Fourth/Fifth Grade Curriculum on Dialects: Practitioner's Manual.* Unpublished ms. Center for Applied Linguistics.

APPENDIX A: Example of a Curriculum Unit with a Humanistic Objective

UNIT ONE: The Nature of Dialects and Language Attitudes

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
1.1 To recognize dialect variation as a natural product of cultural and regional differences in society	1.1.1 Video vignettes from "American Tongues" 1.1.2 Small group discussion
1.2 To observe the range of language attitudes that are manifested about language, including the unwarranted stereotypes and linguistic prejudice often associated with language differences	1.2.1 Video vignettes from "American Tongues" 1.2.2 Small group discussion 1.2.3 Class discussion
1.3 To learn the distinction among dialect differences in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary	1.3.1 Workbook reading 1.3.2 Small group discussion 1.3.3 Class discussion
1.4 To begin making independent observations about language differences	1.4.1 Language Journal (Ongoing)

Requirements: Class distribution into small groups of 4-5 students each, with a leader, a recorder, and spokesperson for each group

Materials: Student Workbook (page 1)
VCR player, TV monitor
Video "American Tongues: Elementary School Version"
4" x 6" file cards for each group

Initial Organization: Students are broken into small groups of 4-5 students. Each group should have a leader responsible for coordinating student activities, a recorder

who writes down responses for the group, and a spokesperson, who reports for the group in general class activities. These roles may be rotated or designated for the duration of the curriculum, although group membership should be the same for all lessons. Working groups may be given names reflecting dialect variation for some type of item (for example, groups may be given names for dialect variants of sandwiches (e.g.,) or drinks (e.g., ***shake, frappe, cabinet, frost ('milkshake'); soda, pop, tonic***)

Time: 5 Minutes

Warm-up Activity: (whole class) Introduce students to the notion of dialect diversity by having students think of experiences in which they travelled to a different region or someone from a different region visited their area. Have them recount the kinds of things they noticed about language differences. Guide them to give specific examples of accent or language rather than vague overall characterizations such as "nasal", "twang", etc. After eliciting reactions to others' speech, have them relate experiences in which someone might have commented on something about their or their families' speech. ("Did someone from another area ever say anything about the way you speak?")

Introduce the notion that everyone speaks a dialect. This notion may be introduced by using the metaphor of a pie that is cut into pieces. It is impossible to eat the pie without eating a piece of the pie. Similarly, a person speaks a language only by speaking some dialect of the language (All major languages have dialects).

Time: 5 minutes

Video Vignettes and Small Group Discussion: Introduce the video "American Tongues" to the students by saying that they are going to see some examples of dialects about different places and different people in America. As students watch the video, they should think about the following set of questions. Place the questions on the chalkboard or on a display board at the front of the classroom.

What is a dialect?
What do people think about dialects?
Are people's feelings about dialects fair? Why or why not?
What do you think about dialects?
Can you give one example of a dialect difference from the video and one that is not on the video?

Time for Introduction of Video and Presentation of Questions: 25 minutes

Following the video, each group will discuss the questions and the group recorder will write down the group's response to each of the questions on a different 4" x 6"

file card. In the case of disagreements among group members, different viewpoints should be represented by the recorder and spokesperson.

Time for Group Discussion: 10 minutes

Group Summary: Each group summarizes its answers to the questions for the entire class.

Time: 5 minutes

Introduction of Levels of Dialect: Introduce students to different language levels of dialect by referring to the definitions of **dialect pronunciation, dialect vocabulary,** and **dialect grammar** in the workbook. The examples in the definitions attempt to illustrate by using examples from other dialects as well as dialect variants found in the local area. Introduce the students to the definitions and ask them to give examples not found in the definitions.

WORD DEFINITIONS

DIALECT A form of a language spoken by a group of people from the same regional or cultural background. ***Everyone speaks a dialect, even though some dialects are more noticeable than others.***

DIALECT PRONUNCIATION When people from certain regions or cultural backgrounds ***pronounce the same words differently,*** it is called a **dialect pronunciation**. For example, some people from New England pronounce the word car and far without the r. Also, some people from the South may say greasy with a z sound in the middle of the word, so that they pronounce it as greazy. In Baltimore, the way different people say the name of the city, Baltimore, or the different ways they say the word dog is a pronunciation difference.

DIALECT VOCABULARY When people from certain regions or cultural backgrounds use ***different words for the same thing, or the same word means something different*** it is called a **dialect vocabulary** difference. For example, some people in Philadelphia and New Jersey use the word hoagie for the same kind of sandwich that other people call a sub. Also, some people in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, use the word gumband when people in other parts of the United States use the word rubberband. In Baltimore, some people may ask if they may hold a dollar when people in other parts of the United States may say borrow a dollar. This is a vocabulary difference.

DIALECT GRAMMAR When people from different regions or cultural backgrounds ***put together their sentences or their words in different ways,*** it is called a **dialect**

grammar difference. For example, some people from western Pennsylvania say The house needs painted when people from other parts of the United States say The house needs painting. Also, some people from the Appalachian mountains say The man went a-hunting when other people say The man went hunting. When African Americans in Baltimore say They always be going to the park where other groups say They are always going to the park, it is called a dialect grammar difference.

Time: 5 minutes

Introduction of Language Journal: At the back of each workbook are several pages entitled **Language Journal**. Instruct students to write down dialect forms that they observe outside of class (e.g., in the neighborhood, home), identifying what type of dialect difference it is. They may also write down reactions to activities and discussions in class. Instructors are encouraged to use a **Dialogue Journal** format for this curriculum. A brief overview of dialogue journals is given in the appendix.

Time: 5 minutes

APPENDIX B: Sample Exercises Demonstrating the Scientific Study of Language Patterning

A. EXAMPLE ONE: NEW ENGLAND R-DROPPING

HOW PRONUNCIATION DIFFERENCES WORK: DROPPING R IN ENGLISH DIALECTS

In New England and other dialects of English, the r sound of words like car or poor can be dropped. In these words, the r is not pronounced, so that these words sound like "cah" and "poo". However, not all r sounds can be dropped. In some places in a word, the r sound may be dropped and in other places it may NOT be dropped. By comparing lists of words where the r may be dropped with lists of words where it may **NOT** be dropped, we can figure out a pattern for r-dropping.

List A gives words where the r may be DROPPED.

LIST A.
1. car
2. father
3. card
4. bigger
5. cardboard
6. beer
7. court

List B gives words where the r sound may **NOT** be dropped. In other words, speakers who drop their r's in List A, pronounce the r in the words in List B.

LIST B.
1. run
2. bring
3. principal
4. string
5. okra
6. approach
7. April

To find a pattern for dropping the r, look at the type of sound that comes before the r in List A and in List B. Does a vowel or a consonant come before the r in List A? What comes before the r in List B? How can you predict where an r may or may not be dropped?

In List C, pick those words that may drop their r and those that may not drop their r. Use your knowledge of the r-dropping pattern that you learned by comparing List A and B.

LIST C

____ 1. bear
____ 2. program
____ 3. fearful
____ 4. right
____ 5. computer
____ 6. party
____ 7. fourteen

Think of two new words that may drop an r and two new words that may NOT drop an r.

MORE ABOUT R-DROPPING PATTERNS

In the last exercise we saw that r dropping only takes place when the r comes after a vowel. Use this information to pick those words in the list that may drop their r and those words that may not drop their r. Tell why the words can or cannot drop the r.

Review List

____ 1. pear
____ 2. practice
____ 3. teacher
____ 4. rich
____ 5. board

Now we are going to look at the kinds of sounds that may come **AFTER** the r in some dialects of English. This pattern goes along with the one you already learned. Let's see if we can figure out the pattern.

Here are some words where the r may NOT be dropped even when it comes after a vowel.

List A: Words that do NOT drop R

1. bear in the field
2. car over at the house
3. garage
4. caring

5. take four apples
6. pear on the tree
7. far enough

What kinds of sounds come after the r in **List A**? Are they vowels or consonants?

In **List B** the r MAY be dropped. What kind of sounds come after the r in this list?

List B: Words that Drop R

1. bear by the woods
2. car parked by the house
3. parking the bus
4. fearful
5. take four peaches
6. pear by the house
7. far behind

How does this pattern or rule for r-dropping work in terms of sounds that come after r?

Use your knowledge of the rule for r-dropping to pick the r's that may and may not be dropped in the sentence given below.

1. **The teacher picked on three students for an answer.**
2. **Four cars parked far away from the fair.**

B. EXAMPLE TWO: A SOUTHERN VOWEL MERGER

A SOUTHERN VOWEL PRONUNCIATION

In some Southern dialects of English, words like ***pin*** and ***pen*** are pronounced the same. Usually, both words are pronounced as ***pin***. This pattern of pronunciation is also found in other words. **List A** has words where the *i* and *e* are pronounced the **SAME** in these dialects.

LIST A: *I* and *E* Pronounced the Same

1. *tin* and *ten*
2. *kin* and *Ken*
3. *Lin* and *Len*
4. *windy* and *Wendy*
5. *sinned* and *send*

Although *i* and *e* in **List A** are pronounced the **SAME**, there are other words where *i* and *e* are pronounced differently. **List B** has word pairs where the vowels are pronounced **DIFFERENTLY.**

LIST B: *I* and *E* Pronounced Differently

1. *lit* and *let*
2. *pick* and *peck*
3. *pig* and *peg*
4. *rip* and *rep*
5. *litter* and *letter*

Is there a pattern that can explain why the words in **List A** are pronounced the **SAME** and why the words in **List B** are pronounced **DIFFERENTLY?** To answer this question, you have to look at the sounds that are next to the vowels. Look at the sounds that come after the vowel. What sound is found next to the vowel in all of the examples given in **List A**?

Use your knowledge of the pronunciation pattern to pick the word pairs in **List C** that are pronounced the **SAME (S)** and those that are pronounced **DIFFERENTLY (D)** in this Southern dialect.

LIST C: Same or Different?

__ 1. *bit* and *bet*
__ 2. *pit* and *pet*
__ 3. *bin* and *Ben*
__ 4. *Nick* and *neck*
__ 5. *din* and *den*

How can you tell where *i* and *e* will be pronounced the same and where they will be pronounced differently?

C. EXAMPLE THREE: A GRAMMATICAL PATTERN IN AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

A SPECIAL USE FOR *BE*

The form be is sometimes found in dialects spoken by African Americans where other dialects use am, is, or are. Some sentences fit with be better than others. In the sentences given here, choose one of the sentences in each pair where be fits better. Choose only one sentence for each pair. If you're not sure of the answer, simply make your best guess. Put a check next to the answer you think is right.

1. __ a. They usually be tired when they come home.
   __ b. They be tired right now.

2. __ a. When we play basketball, she be on my team.
   __ b. The girl in the picture be my sister.

3. __ a. James be coming to school right now.
   __ b. James always be coming to school.

4. __ a. Wanda be going to school every day.
   __ b. Wanda be in school today.

5. __ a. My ankle be broken from the fall.
   __ b. Sometimes my ears be itching.

APPENDIX C: Example of an Exercise with a Socio-Historical Objective: The Development of African American English in Baltimore

Migratory Route Exercise: Have each small group draw lines on a map that shows likely routes for the passage of English from England to West Africa, from West Africa to the West Indies and from Africa to the southern port of Charleston, South Carolina. From this Southern area, then have students draw a likely route to more northern areas such as Baltimore, Maryland. Stress the fact that this route was a typical migratory path rather than one that was followed by all descendants of Africans. Following the exercise, have the small groups share their migratory maps with the class.

The Migration of English through Africa to the United States

On the map given on the next page, draw lines that show the path that English might have travelled through Africa to the West Indies and to the United States. Then draw a line showing how African Americans from the South might have brought English to other parts of the United States. Your group should draw one map on which everyone agrees. Follow these steps in drawing the lines on your map.

1. Draw a line that shows the path that a ship might take from the coast of England to the West African country of Sierre Leone.

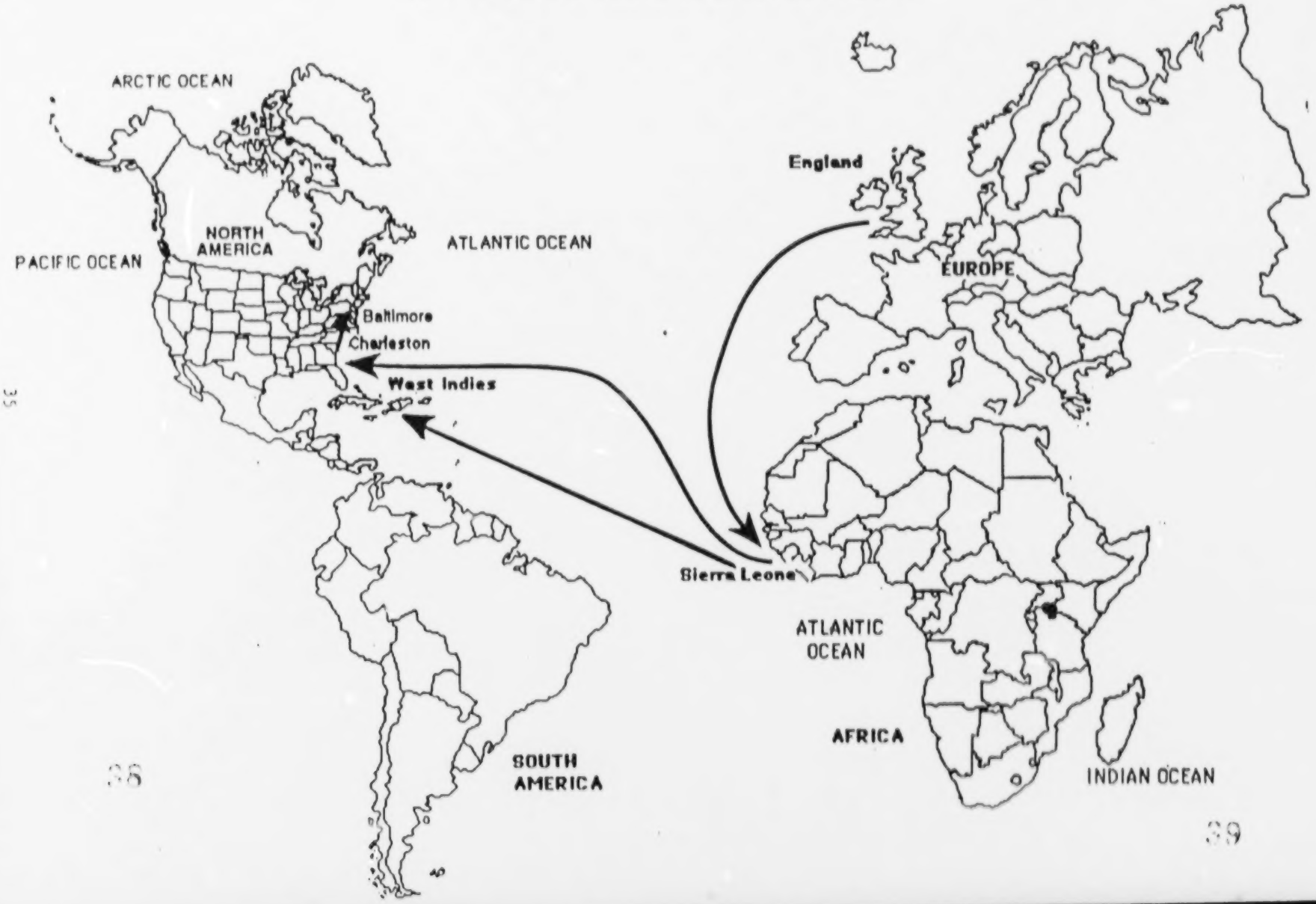
2. Draw a line showing the path that a ship might travel going from the West Coast of Africa to the West Indies.

3. Draw a line showing the path that a ship might take from the West Coast of Africa to Charleston, South Carolina, where many Africans were originally taken.

4. Draw a line showing the path that people coming from the West Indies might take to the coast of the United States.

5. Draw a line showing the path that people might travel when they go from a southern state such as South Carolina to a city like Baltimore.

The Sources of African American English



Appendix D: Example of an Exercise Promoting Island Quaintness: Definitional Fun Preserving a Lexical Heritage in Ocracoke

AN OCRACOKE IQ TEST

or

HOW TO TELL A DINGBATTER FROM AN OCOCKER

1. *dingbatter*
   a. baseball player in a small boat
   b. a husband
   c. a wife
   d. an outsider
2. *winard*
   a. a poker-playing wino
   b. moving into the wind
   c. a person who wins a game
   d. a piece of equipment used in crabbing
3. *meehonky*
   a. a call used in hide and seek
   b. a call made to attract ducks
   c. the call of an angry person
   d. an island marsh plant
4. *quamish*
   a. an upset stomach
   b. a fearful feeling
   c. a bad headache
   d. an excited feeling
5. *pizzer*
   a. a small boat
   b. a deck
   c. a porch
   d. a small Italian pie with cheese
6. *mammick* (also spelled *mommuck*)
   a. to imitate someone
   b. to bother someone
   c. to make fun of someone
   d. to become close friends with someone

7. She's *to* the restaurant.
   a. She ate at the restaurant twice.
   b. She's been to the restaurant.
   c. She's at the restaurant.
   d. She's going to the restaurant.
8. *fladget*
   a. gas in the alimentary canal
   b. an island men's game
   c. a small island bird
   d. a small piece of something
9. *puck*
   a. a small disk used in island hockey games
   b. a sweetheart
   c. a kiss on the cheek
   d. a mischievous person
10. *Ococker*
   a. a derogatory term for an Ocracoker
   b. a outsider's mispronunciation of the term Ocracocker
   c. an island term for a native Ocracoker
   d. an island term for bluefish
11. *token of death*
   a. a coin needed for admission to Hades
   b. a sickness leading to death
   c. a fatal epidemic
   d. an unusual event that forecasts a death
12. *louard*
   a. lowering an anchor
   b. an exaggerated exclamation, as in "louard have mercy"
   c. moving away from the wind
   d. a fatty substance
13. *Russian rat*
   a. an island rodent
   b. an island gossip
   c. a vodka-drinking narc
   d. a mink
14. *Hatterasser*
   a. a storm that blows in from Hatteras
   b. a ferry ride from Ocracoke to Hatteras
   c. a person from Hatteras
   d. a fishing trip in Hatteras Inlet
15. *skiff*
   a. a large boat
   b. a small boat

c. a strong wind
d. a light wind

OCRACOKE IQ SCORE

0-4	=	a complete dingbatter
5-8	=	an educable dingbatter
9-12	=	an average Ococker
13-15	=	an island genius

*Thanks to James Barrie Gaskill for his corrective input on this test.

North Carolina Language and Life Project
North Carolina State University
March 1993

Answers:

1.	d	9.	b
2.	b	10.	c
3.	a	11.	d
4.	a	12.	c
5.	c	13.	a
6.	b	14.	c
7.	c	15.	b
8.	d		